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ABSTRACT

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) supports the development by media specialists of the competencies and skills they need, whether derived from training in general and professional education, or from media specialization. The "Certification Model for Professional School Media Personnel," developed and designed by an AASL committee and media professionals, provides direction in the development of state and regional certification guidelines. Three areas considered in the model are: (1) planning state certification design, (2) candidate assessment process; and (3) competencies. The seven areas of competence include: (1) relation of media to instructional systems, (2) administration of media programs, (3) selection, utilization, and production of media, and (4) research and evaluation. The model emphasizes continual professional growth and media staff development, accomplished through continuous evaluation and change of instructional and media activities and academic programs. (KP)

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School Media Specialist Certification

by

David R. Bender

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Sunday, January 30, 1977
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SCHOOL MEDIA SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION

As I begin my remarks today on the certifying of school library media personnel, I am going to quote the opening two paragraphs found in the "Introduction" to the *Certification Model for Professional School Media Personnel*.

"In a rapidly changing society, the relevance and validity of current practices are constantly being challenged. Within the field of education, the knowledge explosion and technological developments have created the need for new staffing patterns in our schools. Since the emphasis is on learning rather than teaching, the role of the school media program is of major importance. The unified media concept has evolved into a program which provides a full range of materials, accompanying technology, and services to meet the inspirational, informational, and recreational needs of students and members of the instructional team. The media program encourages students to explore on their own, or in small or large groups, areas of interest which have been aroused either by the curriculum or by personal experiences.

"The educational preparation required of persons working in this type of environment is different from that of the traditional librarian, audio-visualist, and educational television personnel. A wide variety of competencies are needed by media professionals so that they may satisfy the demands placed upon the school media program. They need competencies derived from educational programs in general education, professional education, and media specialization."[1]

If the recent material released by two federal agencies is accurate, the future predictions for the job opportunities within the school library media community look rather bright.

"In the 1968-69 school year, there were approximately 40,000 persons employed as school librarians. The total employed by 1980 could range from 51,000 to as high as 200,000 depending on the assumptions one wishes to make. The demand for library technicians could range from a very rough estimate of about 24,000 presently employed to a high of 204,000 in 1979-80.

"For AV specialists, the demand could increase from about 40,000 presently employed to as high as 204,000 in 1980, and the demand for media specialists could range from the small handful presently employed to 50,000 by 1980."[2]

"Employment of school media personnel is projected to grow to nearly 80,000 by 1985, from 52,000 in 1970. Much of this growth will not occur until the 1980's, when school enrollments are projected to turn sharply upward."[3]

However, even prior to these optimistic predictions, the library media profession, as stated earlier, was examining its role, function, and competencies needed for fulfilling the changing demands being placed upon this member of the school's instructional team.

"During the past decade the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has shown increasing concern for the development of professional competencies and skills to be possessed by current and future media specialists. This concern has been documented in the publication of the School Library Manpower Project, *Standards for School Media Programs* (1969), *Media Programs: District and School* (1975), and reports of several AASL committees. At the same time, colleges and universities face a growing need for direction in the establishment of competency-based programs, and many state educational agencies used certification requirements that did not certify persons according to the needs of their job responsibilities.

"In response to concerns facing the profession, the American Association of School Librarians established a committee to study and examine certification trends and practices. When appointing the committee, then AASL president, Ben Franckowiak, was careful to select members who would provide a cross-section of professional experiences, job responsibilities and placement, and training in all aspects of the media field. The sixteen-member committee first met during the 1974 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Chicago."[4]

To assist the committee in designing the model, seven points were agreed upon. These were:

"1. It was apparent that, due to the characteristics and variations found in each of the states, no arbitrary model will or should fit all eventual users without adaptation or modification upon their part.

2. Certification requirements and procedures are established by individual states. There exists no nationally accepted certification requirements.

3. The initial model would reflect only district- and building-level media personnel.

4. Differentiated staffing patterns would be suggested.

5. A competency-based approach would be taken leaving options open to the user as to the final direction to be taken.

6. The concepts characteristic of a unified media program would be reflected.

7. The model would be based on general educational program requirements as well as a professional media program."[5]

It was envisioned that the model would assist in providing direction in the development of state and regional guidelines. The model is not intended to be prescriptive; it must be the responsibility of each user to adapt the model to local needs. The committee further believes that any certification practice should provide for and promote continuous progress in assisting persons to reach advanced levels of certification.

Individuals from all parts of the country and areas of the educational community were involved in planning, designing, or writing the model. "In February 1975, over 430 copies of a 'Review Model' were mailed to various persons across the country. Individuals who received the model included AASL committee chairpersons, presidents of state media associations, selected deans and faculty members of media education programs, state certification officers, state school media supervisors, selected district media supervisors, and seven other professional associations. Each person was asked to react to specific items contained in the 'Review Model' and state how he might use the document. Approximately 46 percent of those polled responded. The following is an analysis of their responses:

	Yes	No
1. Does the content reflect current and future practices regarding media certification?	152	10
2. Is the organization logical and easy to use?	162	12
3. Are there additional items which should be included in a national certification model?	86	68

"In addition to these mailed copies, the model was discussed at four statewide or regional meetings (Colorado, Connecticut, Michigan, and New England). These sessions were of particular value since many building- and district-level media personnel were in attendance as well as college and university faculties. Their comments were recorded and considered in the redesign of the 'Review Model.'

"On June 6, 7, and 8, 1975, a subcommittee met to revise the model according to the comments received. The responses were itemized and twenty-two suggested changes were made. The model was finalized with all of these changes in mind. At an AASL Board of Directors meeting in San Francisco, June 1975, the *Certification Model for Professional School Media Personnel* received final approval."[6]

The model is divided into three broad areas: (1) Planning State Certification Design, (2) Candidate Assessment Process, and (3) Areas of Competencies. Following these three sections are a glossary, bibliography, and appendix. A brief overview for each of the three major sections of the model is given below using quotes from the document.

"*PLANNING STATE CERTIFICATION DESIGN*

The certification pattern for media specialists should be compatible with the practices and procedures for other educational personnel within the state or area. Committees or task forces should be established to plan the certification design. . . . It is recognized that there should be more than one possible point of entry for media professionals . . . there should be more than one level of certification for media professionals. The point of entry into the school media profession is the first professional certificate granted to the candidate in the media area. . . . It is expected that there will be continuing professional development for all persons within the media field, regardless of the certification at entry. . . . The design should also provide mobility between and within building and district level positions. . . . Beginning level media professionals should have basic competencies in all areas identified in this document. . . . The methods of measuring this attainment may vary from state to state. . . . Incentive programs should be provided which encourage professionals to strive for higher degrees of capabilities. . . . Continuing educational experiences can be provided for in numerous settings. . . .

"*CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS*

After developing its own certification design, each state will need to establish the process for determining whether or not candidates qualify for a certificate and at what level. . . . Although this document places emphasis on competencies, there are numerous strategies for assessing candidate qualifications and granting certificates. . . . Determining competencies or proficiencies should be an integral part of any evaluation process. . . . The designing of the assessment process should involve representatives from various groups within the educational community, such as media professionals, other teaching personnel, administrators, and professional associations. . . .

"*AREAS OF COMPETENCIES*

The certification of professional media personnel by state agencies or their designated representatives is based upon the premise that the candidate for certification has achieved a required level of proficiency. . . . What constitutes . . . proficiency must be based upon the identification of those competencies necessary to guarantee accountable performance in the field. A concerted effort has been made . . . to identify the responsibilities and appropriate competencies of the school media professional. . . . The seven major competencies here delineated are those which are needed by all media professionals. They . . . serve as a model from which state departments of certification can proceed and should in no way inhibit the expansion of these competencies into a more inclusive coverage. Each of the seven major competencies is described with its definition and is then subdivided into more discrete statements. Candidates . . . will need to demonstrate proficiency in all . . .; however, the degree of required competency will vary depending upon the educational level obtained, job assignment, and responsibilities."[7]

After much study, thought, and examination, the original listing of ten major competency areas was synthesized into the existing seven. The same skills appear only in a more logically arranged fashion due to better grouping and less redundancy. It was decided that the following format would be used in describing each competency: (1) competency area, (2) descriptive statement, and (3) demonstrated abilities.

The seven competency areas within the model and descriptive statements for each are as follows. The demonstrated abilities listed under each competency area have not been included since they are too numerous for coverage in this article.

1. *Relation of Media to Instructional Systems.* Relating media to instructional systems is the ability to apply the principles of learning and learning theory by assisting individuals or groups in the pursuit of informational objectives.
2. *Administration of Media Programs.* Administration is the ability to develop and implement media programs which facilitate the achievement of the educational

goals, including the process of management of the media and human resources.

3. *Selection of Media.* The selection of media is the ability to apply basic principles of evaluating and selecting media to support the instructional program.
4. *Utilization of Media.* The utilization of media is the ability to assist faculty and students in the use of the school media program which enhances the learning process. A thorough knowledge of media is essential for promoting its effective use.
5. *Production of Media.* The production of media is the ability to plan, design, and produce materials to supplement those available through other channels.
6. *Research and Evaluation.* Research and evaluation are the ability to interpret and apply recorded research and evaluative data applicable to media programs, and to design and implement studies relative to the media center program when there is an identified need.
7. *Leadership and Professionalism.* Leadership and professionalism are the ability to conceive, synthesize, promote, and direct media programs reflecting a commitment to professional ethics.

Instructional and media activities should be examined continuously and appropriate changes made. The programs offered by academic institutions preparing school personnel also require careful evaluation. In the library media field, programs should be reviewed frequently to insure a unified

media approach and that proper educational programs are provided for staff. The model emphasizes the desirability of continual professional growth and media staff development. It is safe to say that no process will ever be completely valid for meeting everyone's needs; therefore, this is the beginning. The model requires further study and development according to local, state, and regional needs. Here state associations, state educational agencies, college and university personnel, professional educational organizations, and other concerned individuals can play an active role.

Footnotes

1. American Association of School Librarians, *Certification Model for Professional School Media Personnel*, American Library Association, Chicago, 1976, p.1.

2. U.S. Office of Education, *The Education Professions 1971-72*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1973, p.45.

3. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Library Manpower: A Study of Demand and Supply*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1975, p.xi.

4. David R. Bender, "School Media Personnel Certification Model," *School Media Quarterly*, Spring 1976, p.193.

5. Ibid., p.194.

6. Ibid., p.195.

7. American Association of School Librarians, *Certification Model for Professional School Media Personnel*, American Library Association, Chicago, 1976, pp.3-8.

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